

**SUMMARY OF THE
ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
DECEMBER 18, 2002**

The Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) met December 18, 2002, at 11:00 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) by teleconference. Chairperson Ms. Zonetta English of the Louisville/Jefferson County MSD led the meeting. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Edward Kantor, ELAB's Designated Federal Officer (DFO), opened the meeting with a welcome. He asked guests present on the conference call to introduce themselves. ELAB was joined by Ms. Pat Kloppenburg of the Illinois Department of Public Health and by Mr. Steve Hawthorne of the Hampton Roads Sanitation District. Mr. Kantor then turned the meeting over to Ms. English.

REVIEW OF MINUTES

Ms. English led ELAB in a review of the minutes from ELAB's October 16 and November 21, 2002, meetings. Both sets of minutes were approved with minor corrections.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

Ms. English then reviewed progress on action items from ELAB's November 21 meeting.

- **ELAB Charter and Budget:** Mr. Kantor noted that he had talked to Ms. Vickie Ellis of EPA and that Ms. Ellis would talk to EPA's General Counsel concerning ELAB charter and budget issues. Mr. Kantor indicated that Ms. Ellis anticipated no problem with holding an ELAB meeting at an Institute for National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation (INELA) meeting and no problem with receiving budgetary support for meeting logistics at a non-EPA meeting. Details of the NELAC budget and the designated replacement for Ms. Jeanne Hankins as NELAC Director have not been resolved. Mr. Kantor noted that a meeting on the subject would be held on January 15, 2003, and that these issues would probably not be settled until that date at the earliest. Mr. Kantor also noted that ELAB cannot report to someone other than EPA. ELAB can, however, ask EPA to forward its recommendations to another party such as INELA. Following discussion of a business plan and budget, Mr. Kantor noted that ELAB can submit recommended changes to the ELAB charter to him for discussion with Ms. Ellis and encouraged ELAB to submit those recommended changes to him via email. Dr. Mark Marcus and Mr. Peter Spath agreed to lead this effort.
- **Recap of Discussions at NELAC 8i in Santa Fe, NM:** Ms. English noted that ELAB had deemed the development of a strategic plan to be a good idea based on NELAC changes to separate standards development from the standards adoption process. It was suggested that ELAB should first agree on a revised charter and scope and then articulate needs for which

ELAB envisions requiring contractor support. Focusing on needs rather than money and people, members of ELAB agreed to articulate the need for additional support to carry out ELAB's mission. Dr. Michael Green and Ms. English agreed to lead the effort to develop a funding request or cost estimate based on the charter-scope document to be prepared by Dr. Marcus and Mr. Peter Spath. Ms. English indicated that she and Dr. Green would need information from RTI and Mr. Kantor on the level of past support in order to draft their proposal. Mr. Kantor agreed to also compile some information about other federal advisory committees that have a budget and contractor support so that ELAB could pattern its request after it. Ms. Hankins noted that it is important to explain what ELAB plans to do with its money and how it will benefit EPA when making a budget request. There was some discussion of critical time issues regarding the budget and charter. The charter will expire in July 2003.

- **Training of Laboratory Assessors:** There was some discussion of a small workgroup to address on-site assessment issues. It was noted that there needs to be some liaisoning between ELAB and the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) before any recommendations are made. It was noted that not every accrediting authority has met the assessor training requirement. It was agreed that ELAB's goal would be to make an assessment on whether training programs in place are current with the NELAC standards and are sufficient to bring all assessors up to the same proficiency level for reciprocity between states. Members of ELAB expressed the feeling that some training courses that were mentioned early in the NELAC process have not been fully developed. It was suggested that training is only one symptom of a bigger problem, i.e. implementation of the program. Dr. Green agreed to lead the effort to assess the current state of assessor training. Ms. English agreed to assist him.
- **Detection Limits:** Since Mr. Robert Wyeth was not present on the call, this issue was deferred to a future meeting. Ms. English did recap the discussion from NELAC 8i for Dr. Green, who was not present in Santa Fe. It was noted that the issue is a contentious one.
- **PBMS:** Dr. Harry Gearhart noted that any recommendations from ELAB are on hold pending a January 28, 2003, EPA workshop to refine the previous workproduct into proposed language for NELAC. There was some discussion of whether the workshop would be available via teleconference. There was also some discussion of ELAB's previous recommendations on EPA reference methods (1997, #13 and #14 on ELAB handout from meeting at NELAC 8i), which are still valid. It was suggested that EPA does not respond to groups of recommendations because they cannot respond to all of them. Mr. Jerry Parr agreed to take the lead on developing draft language to be inserted into a letter to EPA to follow up on these recommendations. It was agreed that ELAB would ask EPA to respond to any recommendations for which they have a response rather than hold the recommendations until they have a response for all of them.
- **Laboratory Accreditation Model Study:** Mr. Spath noted that the model study provided at NELAC 8i by Mr. David Friedman contains a number of good accreditation schemes that have already laid a groundwork from which ELAB might borrow. However, the study left out some

organizations that should be included, most notably the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA). Mr. Spath indicated that he and Mr. Wyeth would review accreditation programs and compile a list for inclusion in ELAB's letter to EPA. Dr. Marcus indicated that he would review their workproduct.

- **Language for Recommendation of EPA Endorsement of NELAC:** The members of ELAB agreed that they want EPA to take a leadership position in laboratory accreditation in general, and in NELAC specifically, as a means of improving data quality. It was suggested that the issue deserves the attention of a workgroup. The workgroup's goal would be to develop a recommendation that EPA 1) endorse laboratory accreditation as an important tool to ensure laboratory data quality and 2) develop programs and policies in support of laboratory accreditation programs. It was suggested that the workgroup could use the September 2002 letter to EPA from ECOS as a starting point. After moderate discussion, the following individuals agreed to serve on the workgroup: Mr. Parr (to develop language), Dr. Green (to review), and Dr. Gearhart (to review).
- **Update on White Paper on Restructured NELAC:** Dr. Marcus indicated that he had collected consensus organization charters and reviewed them, and that he was actively working on the white paper. Dr. Allen Verstuyft agreed to review and comment on the white paper draft, which Dr. Marcus also anticipated would be completed by January 17.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Implementation:** There was discussion of implementation issues. It was noted that without real reciprocity there is no real national accreditation program. It was also noted that the NELAC standards articulate the program, but the program is not being implemented according to the standards. It was suggested that some mechanism for sharing audit reports must be developed. Other industries, such as the maritime industry, have programs to share audit information. Audit-sharing was identified as just one piece of the bigger implementation issue. After moderate discussion, it was suggested that ELAB capture the issue and share it with the EPA Administrator as a recommendation and ask the Administrator to forward the recommendation to the strategic planning group to be reviewed and addressed. Dr. Marcus agreed to draft the recommendation.
- **Meeting Calendar for 2003:** Ms. English noted that ELAB's 2002 teleconference meetings had been scheduled for the third Wednesday of every month. It was agreed that ELAB would meet on the same schedule in 2003.

CONCLUSION

Ms. English opened the floor to comments from guests on the conference call. There were no comments. She thanked the members of ELAB for their participation. There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned shortly before 1:00 p.m. by Ms. Hankins since Mr. Kantor had experienced telephone difficulties earlier in the call. The next meeting of ELAB is scheduled as a

teleconference on Wednesday, January 22, 2003, at 11:00 a.m., Eastern Standard Time (EST).

**ACTION ITEMS
ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD
DECEMBER 18, 2002**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1	Mr. Kantor will follow up on ELAB charter and budget issues.	Status reported by 01/17/03
2	Dr. Marcus and Mr. Spath will draft recommended changes to the ELAB charter and email them to Mr. Kantor.	Status reported by 01/17/03
3	Dr. Green and Ms. English will draft funding/budget proposal to EPA, with input from Mr. Kantor and RTI.	Status reported by 01/17/03
4	Dr. Green and Ms. English will develop assessment of current state of assessor training.	Status reported by 01/17/03
5	Mr. Parr will draft language to be inserted into a letter to EPA to follow up on ELAB's past recommendations on EPA reference methods.	Status reported by 01/17/03
6	Agency Endorsement of NELAC Workgroup will draft recommendation to EPA to endorse and support NELAC.	Status reported by 01/17/03
7	Dr. Marcus will draft recommendation on implementation of national accreditation program.	Status reported by 01/17/03

**PARTICIPANTS
ELAB MEETING
DECEMBER 18, 2002**

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Attacment B (Continued)

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Ms. Pat Kloppenburg (Guest)	Illinois Department of Public Health	
Mr. Steve Hawthorne (Guest)	Hampton Roads Sanitation District	